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'lack of food... hunger and malnutrition'

Although women produce half of the world's food, women and girls in developing countries will often be expected to eat the leftovers after the men and boys have finished eating, and if there are food shortages, they are the ones who tend to go without.

- Oxfam has found that in many communities where we work, from China to several African countries, men and boys get the preferential access to food in the household
- Poverty measurements often do not cover unequal treatment within a family; gender-disaggregated data on access to food and any resultant nutritional problems do not appear in the main annuals published by such international bodies as UNDP and World Bank

'lack of productive resources sufficient to ensure a sustainable livelihood'

Most women do not have legal or traditional rights to land or other assets. They can't get loans or credit because they have no collateral. Other resources needed for success in business include skills training, time, and information on markets. Women are less likely to have these resources than men, and hence they are concentrated in low-return, insecure, informal occupations. Lacking alternatives, many can't leave abusive men because they are wholly dependent on them for their survival.

- Globally, women hold 60-90% of labour-intensive jobs in the clothing & food supply chain ⁽¹⁾
- 80% of garment workers in Guangdong, China, are women under the age of 25 ⁽¹⁾
- Hong Kong women in the New Territories could only inherit land as of 1994

'ill health... increasing morbidity and mortality from illness'

In countries where people pay for healthcare, women are more likely not to go to hospital or clinics when they are ill, and more likely to either treat themselves at home or go to traditional healers. Pregnancy and childbearing carry heavy risks for women who lack access to trained support. Women are also more likely to look after ill family members.

- 48 hours may pass before a girl in Gansu, China, is taken to a clinic; for boys the average is 24 hours ⁽¹⁾
- Each year, about 2 million girls are at risk of female genital mutilation ⁽²⁾

- Maternal mortality: No country in Africa has less than 100 deaths per 1,000 live births, while this is the case in over 20 countries elsewhere in the world ⁽³⁾
- China has the highest rate of female suicide (about 157,000 suicides a year-about half of all female suicides globally) ⁽⁴⁾

'limited or lack of access to education and other basic services'

Two-thirds of the children not in school are girls. Many of them are at home doing housework and looking after other children. Some girl children are already married themselves. Parents may decide not to send girls to school because of fears for their physical safety on the journey there, and even at school, where male teachers and pupils may sexually molest them.

- 64% of illiterate adults in poor countries are women
- In rural Sindh, Pakistan, 40% of parents cited the need for the girls to work at home as the main reason they were unschooled ⁽¹⁾
- In Niger, 70% of girls and 4% of boys are married before the age of 19 ⁽²⁾

'homelessness and inadequate housing'

If a marriage breaks down, or a daughter displeases her parents, in most societies it is the woman who has to leave her home, because she has no rights of ownership regardless of the contribution she has made to the family. Women headed households are more likely to have substandard houses.

- In China, 70% of the landless population is female ⁽¹⁾
- Around Southeast Asia, many new homes being constructed after the tsunami are only being registered in the man's name ⁽¹⁾
- Only in Barbados, Italy and Namibia is it known that agricultural landowners are more than 50% women ⁽²⁾

'unsafe environments'

Gender-based violence, including rape, makes moving around outside one's home perilous for women in all societies. Home is not a safe place either, since domestic violence is widespread, and often condoned by society. If war breaks out, adult men are the first to be called to fight, while women and children are more likely to be civilian casualties. Men do traditionally risky work, like mining or fire fighting, but increasingly women are also working with unsafe chemicals and technologies, in both factories and fields.

- Prenatal sex selection techniques are 'widespread' in Taiwan, India, South Korea and China, with selective abortions of female fetuses ⁽³⁾
- In Egypt, when the distance to a school drops from 1km to 2km, school enrollment rate for girls drops 10%, for boys 2% ⁽¹⁾
- In Cambodia, about 25% of adult women live with domestic violence ⁽¹⁾
- Domestic violence is the biggest cause of injury and death to women worldwide ⁽⁵⁾

'social discrimination and exclusion... lack of participation in decision-making and in civil, social and political life'

Poor men are excluded from government because they are poor. Poor women are excluded for two reasons: poverty and gender. In most societies, women are grossly underrepresented in government, and there is no parliament anywhere that has equal representation of women and men. In many societies, women are also excluded or underrepresented from local decision-making bodies. Economic and financial policies are developed without recognising women's economic contributions in the unpaid and informal parts of the economy.

- Women in Brunei, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and United Arab Emirates cannot vote ⁽²⁾
- Women in Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands, Tonga and the United Arab Emirates hold 0.0% of the seats in Parliament; Rwanda has the highest rate for women (45%) ⁽⁵⁾

Sources: ⁽¹⁾ Oxfam, ⁽²⁾ World Health Organization, ⁽³⁾ *The Atlas of Women-An Economic, Social and Political Survey*, ⁽⁴⁾ UN Millennium Development Goals - China's Progress 2003, ⁽⁵⁾ World Bank Discussion Paper ⁽⁶⁾ UNDP Human Development Report 2004. This article was adapted from "How Does Poverty relate to Gender Inequality?" on the Oxfam Great Britain website (www.oxfam.org.hk). Additional reporting by Madeleine Marie Slavick.

